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ABSTRACT

This curriculum unit can be adapted for students as young as grade 6 or 7 and as old as grade 12. The unit integrates writing process instruction, storytelling lore, mythology, and arts instruction and is in support of standards as defined by the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations and the National Council of Teachers of English. Each of the three lessons in the unit has been planned for a 45-50 minute instructional period, but it is not necessary to follow the lessons in linear fashion. The unit was designed to be implemented through a blend of traditional classroom writing process instruction and Internet exchange. It intends that students will explore their own cultural identity while learning vital aspects of the writing process. The unit provides an overview, lists equipment and materials needed, posits essential questions, discusses relevant standards, and outlines content acquisition. Student handouts are attached. (NKA)

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Mythology Across Time and Borders: Online Workshop

Curriculum

Each lesson in this unit has been planned for a 45-50 minute instructional period. It is not necessary to follow the lessons in linear fashion. Pick and choose the lessons and materials/handouts that meet your class needs and, above all, improvise! Don't feel restricted to use these things as they appear here. You know your class best, feel free to adapt the materials on this site as you see best for them.

Lesson One

Lesson Two

Lesson Three

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Mythology Across Time and Borders: Online Workshop

Introduction

OVERVIEW
This curriculum unit can be adapted for students as young as grade 6 or 7, and as old as grade 12. Additional materials will need to be added to hold the attention of students above grade 10, however. The unit integrates writing process instruction, storytelling lore, mythology, and arts instruction and is in support of standards defined by the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations and the National Council of Teachers of English. Approximate times are given for implementation with a standard grade 8 or 9 class of 20 students.

Students will explore their own cultural identity while learning vital aspects of the writing process. Many students either leave out or do not understand the step of revising their original drafts. They try to jump to correcting mechanics, without any attention to improving content or the communicative quality of their work. By acting as an author and writing about another student in the class, the idea of consulting an authority for content and researching before writing and during revising will become clear to the students. By acting as a topic for another student's writing, each student will simultaneously have an opportunity to explore his or her own cultural identity by providing facts to inform his or her writing partner's draft.

Basic readings on the writing process are provided in the Teacher Reading section. These will help teachers prepare for implementing this unit and will be especially useful for new teachers or for those not generally charged with writing instruction. These include several classics in the field, as well as some newer pieces. In the Background Materials section, handouts are provided for review or basic instruction on the writing process and on the components of a story such as characterization, setting, or theme. Student Handouts are provided wherever required and several optional choices are available.

EQUIPMENT & MATERIALS
This unit was designed to be implemented through a blend of traditional classroom writing process instruction and Internet exchange. Therefore, it would be best to have a computer in the classroom with Internet access and input capability for all student authors. This can be handled in a number of ways. During class time in the classroom or in computer labs, at home, or by dropping in during free time to the class or lab to key in the stories. All reference materials for the teacher, background materials for the students, and handouts are provided on the web site. These materials will print cleanly and quickly as simple text and will not include the web page graphics in the printout in the

interest of saving time. The materials can also be used within a classroom without the Internet component, but we encourage teachers to take advantage of the opportunity to have their students interacting with published authors as mentors.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Essential questions serve to organize lesson preparation and to drive instruction. They guide the teachers in developing a unit from a group of lessons. They also guide the students in constructing conceptual knowledge from the instruction provided by the unit. The questions underlie all material in the unit, and all students will be able to be answer them in depth by the end of the unit:

1. What is a cultural group?

2. How is culture expressed?

3. What place do stories play in cultural groups?

4. How are myths and storytelling related?

5. How can storytelling sustain culture?

Instructional Objectives

STANDARDS

Consortium of National Arts Education Associations:

Standard 2: They (Students) should be able to communicate proficiently in at least one art form, including the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical proficiency.

Standard 3: They should be able to develop and present basic analyses of works of art from structural, historical, and cultural perspectives, and from combinations of those perspectives. This includes the ability to understand and evaluate work in the various arts disciplines.

Standard 4: They should have an informed acquaintance with exemplary works of art from a variety of cultures and historical periods, and a basic understanding of historical development in the arts disciplines, across the arts as a whole, and within cultures.

Standard 5: They should be able to relate various types of arts knowledge and skills within and across the arts disciplines. This includes mixing and matching competencies and understandings in art-making, history and culture, and analysis in any arts-related project.

National Council of Teachers of English:

Standard 3: Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers,

their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

Standard 4: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

Standard 5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Standard 6: Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

Standard 7: Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

Standard 9: Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

Standard 10: Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

Standard 11: Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

Standard 12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

CONTENT ACQUISITION

Students will:

- Consider and recognize themselves as members of a variety of groups, including their cultural group.
- Understand and respect cultural diversity.
- Become familiar with basic storytelling skills and understand how they relate to mythology.
- Gain the concept of storytelling as an artform.
- Understand the place of storytelling and mythology in cultural groups.
- Recognize and respect similarities among the big stories (creation, birth, death, et cetera) of various cultures.
- Recognize and respect differences among the big stories (creation, birth, death, et cetera) of various cultures.

- Become familiar with all of the components of the short story.
- Develop the standard vocabulary necessary to discuss a short story such as characterization, plot, point of view, setting, and theme.
- Gain a thorough understanding of the thinking process, and its parts, as related to the writing process.
- Internalize the parts of the writing process and the reasons why they are necessary.
- Become familiar with a variety of prewriting activities.
- Learn to recognize a draft from a finished project.
- Develop interviewing skills.
- Discuss diverse cultural issues in line with responding to a partner's work.
- Successfully work in peer group or pair situations to revise and edit their works.
- Recognize the difference between revision and editing.
- Develop the ability to revise their own drafts with or without a partner to improve content and communicative ability.
- Become able to act as a responsive and caring writing partner.
- Become more familiar with frequently seen errors in student composition in order to be able to correct them in their own or a partner's work.
- Develop the ability to objectively evaluate his or her own work.
- Understand the importance of including each of the steps of the writing process in producing a final product.

Strategies

Students will interact during a variety of assignments and activities, developed with the intention of having students internalize the writing process, develop a respect for diverse cultures, and gain an introduction to storytelling and mythology:

- Uncovering the similarities and differences, rather than thinking of it in terms of worth, of various cultural groups and their literary and artistic expressions
- Internet and print media research
- Brainstorming, clustering, mapping
- Peer interviews
- Collaborative revising and editing in peer groups or partner situations
- Drafting, revising, redrafting, editing
- Formal writing
- Sharing writing with peer groups and the entire class
- Illustrating their stories
- Dramatizing the stories
- Comparing and contrasting stories and myths from diverse cultures
- Problem-solving

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Lesson One

If you have a chance, begin with a discussion of the importance of stories in our lives. Talk about how stories have been used as a form of communication, as well as an art form, in all countries. Discuss the fact that there are some stories (like Anansi the spider) that appear in many cultures. Begin to discuss the concept of culture (with the students doing most of the talking):

What cultures are represented in the room?

How can you tell what culture group someone belongs to?

Use the Student Handout Cultural Identity Circles to help students place themselves within their various groups, including cultural groups.

How do students express their culture?

Are there any stories from their culture that they could share with the group? Allow several students to tell brief stories from or about their groups not from or about their own lives.

Distribute the Student Handout, Discovering Your Cultural Identity. Have students complete the exercise and discuss the results in a large group setting. Draw the quotation on the sheet into the discussion.

Now, how many cultures are represented in the room?

Today, we will begin an exploration of each student's own personal culture that leads to them documenting one of the special stories from their culture group. It may be a unique story or it may be one of those stories that is told everywhere, but maybe with a special twist. Many of those stories are the oldest of stories.

Does anyone know what they are called?

Begin to introduce the concept of myth. Use the resources found at our major curriculum unit Look in the Mythic Mirror to introduce the concept of myths and storytelling with the remainder of the period. At this time, spend as much or little time and sessions as you need to introduce or review mythology. Relate it to storytelling, and make the students feel comfortable with the fact that all cultures have and value myths and stories as communicative devices.

Supplemental Mythology Lessons:

Use the materials found at Look in the Mythic Mirror as many class periods as necessary to give your students a basic grounding in mythology, its origins and its purposes. Make certain that students understand that many of these stories were the "science" of the day. This makes for a good discussion about certain topics like life in space, infectious disease, cloning et cetera, how we view them now, and how they may be viewed in the future by scientists.

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Lesson Two

Distribute the Student Handout, Discovering Someone's Cultural Identity.

Assign students to work in pairs and to interview each other.

There may be some sensitive cultural issues in your classroom, so try to be aware of them in advance.

Give the students at least 30 minutes to interview each other so that they will have a good base of information from which to construct their first draft.

Allow the student to begin composing a first draft about their partner's cultural with the time left. Make it clear that they are expected to finish a draft about their partner's cultural identity for homework.

The draft should be at least the back and front of a page!

Submitting a draft of this length will lead to no more than an average grade, although quality, not quantity, must be emphasized.

Nothing under one page should be accepted.

If students find that they do not have enough information to write the desired amount, it is because they have not given enough serious attention to the interviewing process.

Let the students know what your expectations are before they begin the interviewing process today. At the end of the class, make certain that they understand that the amount of time they put into this draft will indicate the respect that they hold for their classmate and his or her culture. Try to make this a group discovery process, where all will learn about a variety of cultures. You might prepare by talking about some things that are very similar in many cultures and some things that are very different. For instance, almost all cultures have a tradition of storytelling, but the stories themselves may vary regarding creation, death, birth, etc. Advise students to do their best for their classmates. Tell them that the draft will be due at the beginning of the class after next. (Lesson 4)

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Lesson Three

Distribute Background Materials: Quote Writing Process Graphic.

This is a good chart and a good quote to discuss with students.

Talk with them about the thinking process and the writing process.

Form the students into two teams, a thinking team and a writing team.

Have one person or a pair of students assigned to each wedge of the circle.

The students should look up all of the words contained in their wedge in the dictionary (online or in print) and be prepared to completely explain their part of the process to the entire class. Allow about 10 minutes for this.

Take turns beginning with the synthesis part of the thinking process and ending with the evaluation part of the writing process and go through the chart, explaining the various parts of both processes.

Next, have students consider the circular nature of Boyer's statement.

Explain the brainstorm process. Give each person five minutes to organize his or her thoughts about the quotation on paper through a brainstorm.

Lead them to a discussion based on their brainstorm.

You can have an interesting discussion with the students on responsibility for formal expressions of opinion or feelings, by asking them the next few questions. First, give them a bit of time to write down their thoughts and then have a conversation with the large group. It might be a good idea to put these questions on a handout so students could have them in front of them instead of counting on their listening skills to hold out.

1. What do they really think about Boyer's statement? Why?

2. How can his thought be taken further and applied to other means of expression? Give examples.

3. What are some other means of expression, the other ways you could express how you feel about something? Do they belong in a hierarchy?

4. Would we be as responsible for those kinds of expressions and their effects as our writing? Think, for example, about musicians and the influence of their music (and its lyrics) on people.

5. Do we need to think about these other forms of expression more, then? Would this influence the expression itself? How? Is that right?

6. How can you decide which is the best way to express yourself about a particular topic or happening?

Do a jigsawing discussion exercise:

- There are 6 questions.
- Count off the students around the class from 1 to 6 over and over.
- Tell all of the ones to sit together, all of the twos to sit together, etc.
- Instruct the groups to decide who will give the final report after they finish their discussion, who will take notes to help him do it, and who will keep order to facilitate discussion. (Or you might appoint these group leaders yourself.)
- Group #1 will discuss question 1.
- Explain what consensus is to the students and give an example or two. Make note that it is NOT the strongest or loudest person scaring the others into submission.
- Allow the students to debate it out for about 10 minutes until they can come to a consensus or until they agree to disagree.
- Have each group give a brief report on what happened in their group and what they decided as an answer to their question.

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Online Writing Workshop

TEACHER READING

Clement, Lynne, **"Revising & Editing,"** 1991, rev. 2000.
A brief sheet that discusses the differences between revising and editing and gives teachers tips on dealing with groups of students when conducting these activities. It stresses the importance of revising student work for content and meaning, before giving any attention to the mechanics. Quick to read, but worthwhile.

Hansen, Jane, **When Writers Read**, Chapter 12; Heineman, 1985.
This article gives teachers some information on the connections between reading and writing and how to capitalize on them for success in writing instruction. It focuses on skills instruction, reasons for it, how to implement it, and what to keep in mind as classes are conducted.

Jenkinson, Edward B., **"Learning to Write/Writing to Learn,"** Phi Delta Kappan, 1988.
This article will give teachers some background on the difference between the two activities mentioned in the title and the importance of both for their students. "For thousands of students, writing is like trying to run through a minefield strewn with run-on sentences, misspellings, dangling modifiers, and trite expressions. A successful crossing is a rare experience, according to Mr. Jenkinson, who argues that writing should serve instead as a powerful catalyst for learning."

NCTE* President Re-imagines the Possibilities for Curriculum
http://www.ncte.org/news/presidentialspeech992000November.shtml
In his presidential address during the 1999 NCTE Annual Convention, Jerome C. Harste, Indiana University, considered the question "Curriculum, Multiple Literacies, and Democracy: What if English/Language Arts Teachers Really Cared?" The speech, by Harste and Robert F. Carey, Rhode Island College, explores new ways of thinking about curriculum. It reviews the work of several scholars and suggests ways for reinventing curriculum in the future. The authors offer changes, explore challenges, and consider choices they believe could redefine the profession of English education.
*National Council for the Teaching of English

NCTE's Syllabus-site
http://www.ncte.org/syllabi/writing_assessment/
A cyberspace resource where well-known figures in the field of writing assessment have posted their syllabi. Those involved are devoted to the idea of sharing their most recent summary outlines for courses on writing assessment. Participants focus their discussions on the process of critiquing course content. For example, readers might access discussions about important reading materials that could be added to courses on writing assessment or class activities that might improve teaching practices.

The National Writing Project
http://www-gse.berkeley.edu/Research/NWP/nwp.html
The homepage of the mother of all writing projects. It is the oldest and most widely respected project to train teachers to teach writing across the curriculum. It leads to all kinds of local writing projects and training opportunities.

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/
This site includes basics for teachers and students. There is a resource section that includes 130 instructional handouts! Teachers should definitely have a look at the "Resources for Teachers" section's "Materials for teaching writing in any discipline." It includes a great guide for developing assignments.

Strauss, Valerie, **For Students, No Dodging the Drafts**, Washington Post, May 23, 2000
http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A51803-2000May22.html
"Rachel Adler, 8, seated on a rug in her large third-grade classroom, formed a circle with three fellow students who listened intently as she read her story titled, "Why The Tiger Has Stripes." Encircling them were 20 other students who heard how Tiger flung mud on his back to clean off dirty leaves and decided he liked the two-toned look. When she was done, Rachel listened to the children in the small group tell her what was good about her story and how to improve it. The others then judged how well Rachel's evaluators had performed." more...

Viadero, Debra, **Technical Difficulties**, Education Week, May 17, 2000
An essay from Education Week that discusses writing assessment from a variety of angles.

Your Name:

Name of the person you are responding to:

REACTION: Write three or more sentences which convey your opinion regarding the effectiveness of the writer's characterization. Be as specific as you can. Make sure that you address the issues of descriptive language regarding physical characteristics, as well as how the character acts. Let the writer know what the strengths and weaknesses of the characterization are, but please be constructive in your response.

ASSESSMENT: Briefly comment on the success of the writer's characterization in the following areas:
1. Descriptive language:

2. Creativity:

3. Organization:

4. Does the character seem real?

5. Does the character act in keeping with what the writer has said about him or her?

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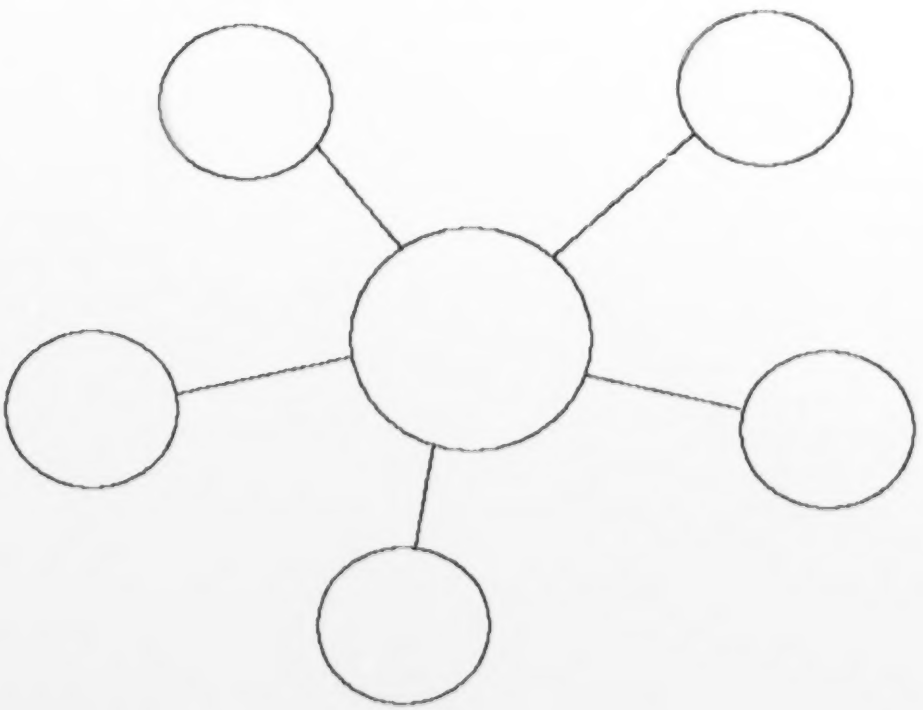
Discovering Your Cultural Identity

To acknowledge our ancestors means we are aware that we did not make ourselves, that the line stretches all the way back, perhaps to God…We remember because it is an easy thing to forget that we are not the first to suffer, rebel, fight, love and die

--Alice Walker

Circles of Our Multicultural Selves
Seeing ourselves in more than one circle,
dancing in/between center and margin…



Directions:

1. Write your name in the center circle.
2. In the smaller circles, write the names of five groups with which you identify.
3. Sit and think about these groups for a few minutes.
4. Be prepared to discuss the groups with your writing partner or with your classmates. Try to find one group that

you belong to that you think will surprise them. Groups can be family, ethnic, country, religious, academic, artistic, hobby, talents, etc.

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Discovering Someone's Cultural Identity & Writing a Biographical Story about Them

The goals are:

1. To get acquainted with other students
2. To discover some prewriting techniques
3. To introduce the drafting and revision process
4. To begin process journals
5. To establish response partners

Read the following questions. Decide which information might help you to write about the person you are going to interview. You may use all or some of these questions or you may make up your own to help you gather information about your partner.

1. Your subject's name.
2. Birthday, place, country.
3. What language do you feel most comfortable using?
4. Were you born speaking another language other than English? If yes, what was it?
5. Was there pressure on you to learn English? If so, by whom?
6. With what culture(s) do you most strongly identify?
7. In how many different ways do you express your culture(s)? For example, do you eat the foods of your culture groups(s)? Do you express the history of your culture(s) to other people?
8. In what ways are you most proud of your culture group(s)?
9. Is your culture group in conflict with any other culture group? If so, why? In your explanation, try to trace the origin of that conflict.
10. Are you aware of other people in this school who are also from the same culture group as you are? How much contact do you have with them? If yes, explain. If no, explain.
11. What are your future plans? Do these plans differ from those of your parents? Do they differ radically from other members of your culture group(s)?
12. Ask the subject to give the names of two books that would detail certain aspects of his/her culture.
13. Ask the subject to describe some of the art forms of his/her culture. These can include traditional and modern art forms. Are there any art forms for which this particular culture is or was especially known? What are they? Do they exist in other cultures? What makes them special in this culture?

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Editing

1. Check for misspelled words.

- Circle them.
- Try to spell those words correctly.
- Ask someone.
- Look up in the dictionary.
- Sound it out.
- Try writing it another way until it "looks" right.

2. Check for punctuation. Re-read.

Use a comma

- After your greeting.
- After your closing.
- Between two sentences, before "and" or "but."
- Between words in a series.

Use a period (.), question mark (?), or exclamation mark (!) at the end of a sentence.

3. Check for capitalization.

- The first letter of the first word in greeting or closing.
- Titles (magazine, book)

4. Indent the first line of every paragraph.

5. Check your format.

In the business letter:

- the heading and closing are lined up under each other on the right side.
- The publication title and greeting are lined up on the left.
- Skip a line
    - After the heading, greeting.
    - Between body of letter and closing.

6. Check for abbreviations.
Write out each word completely - streets, numbers, months, states.

7. Neatness

- Spacing
- Best handwriting

- Legibility

8. Clarity

- Stick to the subject.
- Check to be sure you have used the best wording.
- Be sure everything makes sense.

9. Have a friend check your paper before you give it to senior editor (teacher).

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Revisionist's Name: **Author's Name:**

Revision Sheet

1. What was the best part of this story?

2. How easy was it to figure out what the theme of this story was?
Give a number grade with (1 as very easy to 5 as nearly impossible).

3. State the theme as well as you can figure it out.

4. How well did the author create the setting? Give a number grade (1 as very good job to 5 as not being very convincing at all).

5. Was this a neutral setting? Circle your answer: YES NO
What makes you answer this way?

6. What are the two main components of setting and how are they shown in this story?

7. Name the main character and describe how the author might contribute to a better characterization.

8. From what point of view was the story written?

9. Do you think a different perspective might be better? Why or why not?

10. What parts of the story were confusing?

11. How can the author fix the story to make it more understandable?

12. How can the author make the story more interesting?

10. Are there any additional suggestions that you can give to your partner? Give specific and extensive advice to your partner on how the paper can be improved. Remember, we are examining content here, not mechanics, so do not waste time now looking at grammar and punctuation unless it is an example that truly obscures meaning. Also

remember that you are being graded on acting as a reviser and as an editor, as well as a writer. So, do not give this part abbreviated attention.

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Self Evaluation

Your Name:

WRITER'S COMMENTS:
Evaluate your work objectively in a few sentences. What parts need work?

Discuss the problems you had with the draft, and explain where you think the problem areas are in your characterization draft.

Make a list of the expectations you have for your revision partner or response group. Exactly what do you want them to help you with?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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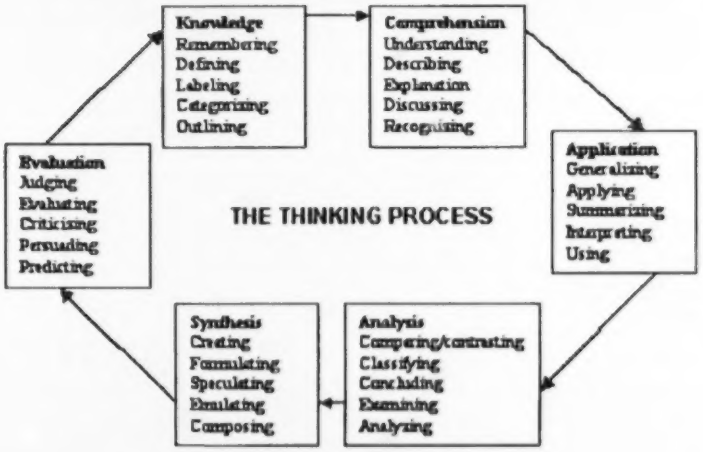
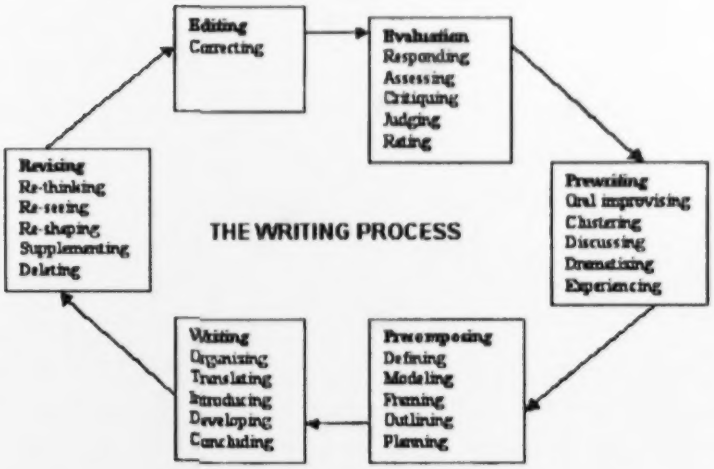
Writing should be taught in every class.
Clear writing leads to clear thinking;
Clear thinking is the basis of clear writing.
Perhaps more than any other form of communication,
Writing holds us responsible for our words
And ultimately makes us more thoughtful human beings.
- Ernest Boyer





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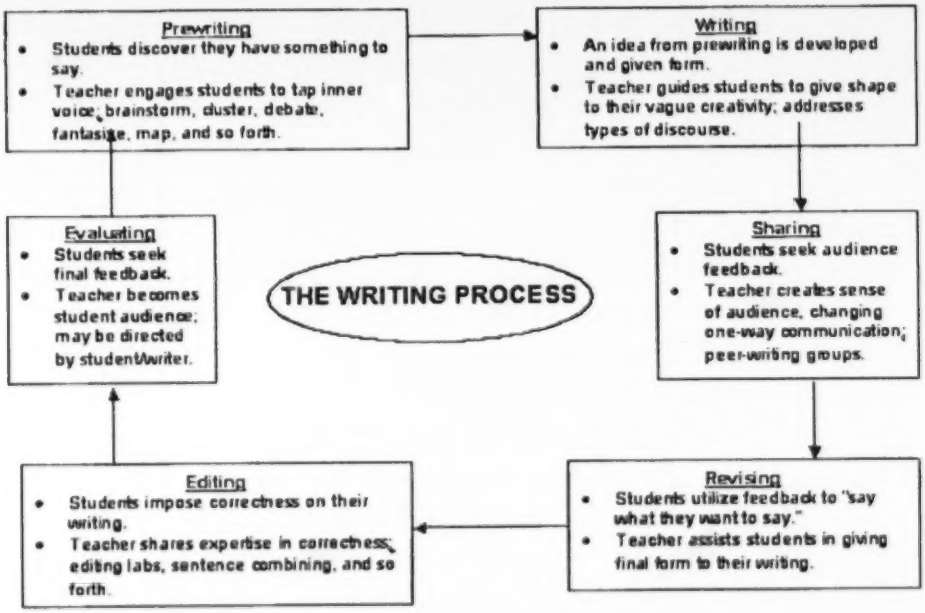
Prewriting
Students discover they have something to say.
Teacher engages students to tap inner voice; brainstorm, cluster, debate, fantasize, map, and so forth.
Writing
An idea from prewriting is developed and given form.
Teacher guides students to give shape to their vague creativity; addresses types of discourse.
Sharing
Students seek audience feedback.
Teacher creates sense of audience, changing one-way communication; peer-writing groups.
Revising
Students utilize feedback to "say what they want to say."
Teacher assists students in giving final form to their writing.
Editing
Students impose correctness on their writing.
Teacher shares expertise in correctness; editing labs, sentence combining, and so forth.
Evaluating
Students seek final feedback.
Teacher becomes student audience; may be directed by student/writer.
THE WRITING PROCESS

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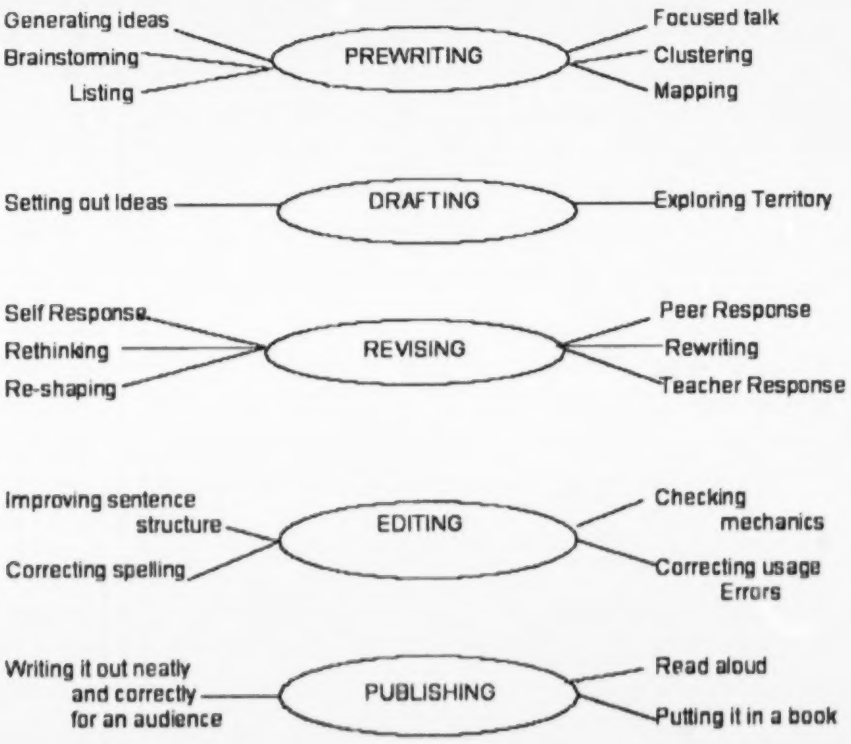
What is the writing process?



You cannot teach a man anything; you can
only help him to find it within himself.

--Galileo

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